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"As it is in Heaven" MATT. VI. 10.

Easter in Heaven

by

Ernest Warburton Shurtless.

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EASTER IN HEAVEN.

BY

ERNEST WARBURTON SHURTLEFF.

... "Paint the scene, O ye that sorrow, and
the consolation take!
One brief glimpse of heaven will comfort
all the human hearts that break" ...

"AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LOUIS MEYNELLE.



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The three sermons in verse, "Easter in Heaven," "Heaven in Easter," and "The Shadow of the Angel," published by L. Prang & Co., were intended only for the congregation before which they were first delivered; but the kindly requests of many who heard them have led the author to submit them to a wider field.

Having been written during the pressing duties of a large parish, and with no thought of their appearance in the present form, they are sent forth with no expectation of literary recognition, but with the simple hope that they may bear some measure of comfort to such hearts as are pleased to receive them.

If their influence be but as the humble flight of a butterfly over a little child's grave, leading some grieving mother to look up, they will have received the highest tribute that is craved.

CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMAGE,
PLYMOUTH, MASS.,
Jan. 14, 1895.



"Gone is Winter's snowy bondage."

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EASTER IN HEAVEN.

“AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.”—Matt. vi-10.

Easter Morning ! and a glory gladdens all the peaceful skies.
On the earth the sunlight brightens, like a gleam from Paradise ;
And the heart turns back, in fancy, to that Easter, long ago,
When, at Joseph's tomb, the angels stood in garments fair as snow ;
And the weeping Marys, gazing on the place where Christ had lain,
Heard the heavenly voices telling how their Lord had risen again.

Easter Morning ! and the Springtide, rich with promise, greets the earth.
Nature seems from death awakening to a new and grander birth.
Soon the violets will blossom, looking up to all that pass,
Like a race of tiny angels sent to bless the lowly grass.
Hark ! I almost hear the bursting of the seeds within the sod.—
Look ! I almost see the lilies peeping forth to look for God !—
Hark ! I almost hear the opening of the buds upon the trees,
As, like some shy, wandering minstrel, comes the woodland-scented breeze,—
Look ! I almost see the spirit of the Spring, divinely fair,
Floating down the dewy valleys with the mayflowers in her hair.
Hark ! I almost hear the stirring of a thousand eager wings,
As from sunny southern borders towards the north each songster springs.

Heaven bends with consolation. Life, and love, and hope, have come ;

Nature smiles, and hangs a rainbow o'er the memory of her gloom.
Gone is Winter's snowy bondage ; gone its shades of doubt and death :
Wood, and hill, and sea, yea, all things, tell of life in every breath :—
Life ! Oh glorious Easter morning ! Well thy dawn at Springtide breaks,
When the earth forgets her sadness and from God new comfort takes.
But my soul, today, is dreaming of the Easter morn in Heaven.

Far above all thought of sorrow, in the homeland God has given ;
Where the blossom never withers on the stalk that bears its bloom :
Where Day's angel never passes into Night's star-guarded tomb ;
Where the brooklet never wearies of the smiling hills and vales,
And the breeze makes rarer music than the plaint of nightingales ;
Where the bells in life's fair temple never toll for one farewell
Save the farewell unto sorrow that is Heaven's only knell :
Never toll to tell time passes and shall never more return ;
For in that sweet heavenly country shall the morn forever burn.

I am thinking of the Easter in that high and holy place,
And the lives that there are gathered in the light of Jesus' face ;
I am thinking of the mansions, of the grand immortal halls,
And the kingly courts, celestial, where earth's shadow never falls.
Grand they are with royal glory, yet, the humblest there may come,
And, amid that lordly splendor, find the tenderness of home,—
Home !—as hushed, as free, as cherished, as the earthly cottage small,
For, tho' grand is God's high dwelling, 'tis a sweet *home*, after all.

I am thinking of the friendships, and the faces that are gone,



"The spirit of the Spring, divinely fair."

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Of the footsteps that are wanting in this earthly Easter morn :
Of the voices that are silent, and the smiles that come no more ;
Of the joy times, and the play times, and the greetings that are o'er :
I am thinking how the gladness that is missed on earth, is there ;
And the Easter day in Heaven is the day the heart would share :
I am thinking of the greetings, and the friendships there renewed
Of the well-beloved faces there again, in gladness, viewed.
Paint the scene, Oh ye that sorrow ! and the consolation take,
One brief glimpse of Heaven will comfort all the human hearts that break ;—
Paint the scene in faith's fair colors ; note the blessed faces there ;—
Yonder smiles a sainted mother, calm sweet eyes, and silver hair ;—
Lips that spoke in benedictions and could never look severe,—
Face God thought of high in Heaven ere He sent its sunshine here,—
On her features dwells the beauty of the old-time trust and calm,
Scarcely changed, except that Heaven gives each look a dearer charm.
But behold ! a sudden stirring in the throngs that round her stand ;
There is some one hastening towards her, stretching forth an eager hand.
'Tis a well-beloved daughter. As of old, they meet again :
Could there but be tears in Heaven, now the tears of joy would rain.
Weary years of separation, all forgot in that embrace !—
And a gladness beatific lights each watching angel's face.
Never more shall these be parted ! Joy too vast to comprehend !
Love and hope and peace, in Heaven, like the morning, know no end.
Paint the picture, ye who sorrow !—Paint that bright and hallowed scene ;
Paint the portrait of the father, with his kindly, serious mien ;
Wife and husband, sister, brother ; and the merry-hearted child
That was charmed away by angels, in the hour it brightest smiled.

Paint the little playmate's picture, as, in Heaven, she laughs at play,—
Little child in God's sweet kingdom, thou shalt be a child for aye !
Never line shall tell of sorrow on thy happy, smiling brow,
Blest are they who enter Heaven pure and fair in heart as thou.

Paint them all,—the loved, the longed for,—even they who erred so here,—
Even they whose lives were fruitful of full many a sigh and tear ;—
Paint them there, and hope in Heaven. Who shall span God's love so vast?—
Who shall say what erring mortal found not God and Heaven at last?—
Paint them all, and stoop no longer o'er the tomb this world hath given ;
Earth breathes farewells to the dying, but there are no graves in Heaven.

Sweet it is for us to wonder what our loved are doing there,
On their Easter day, in Heaven, while on earth this hope we share.
Surely they, too, hold memorials of a day so grand and good,
And the angels join with mortals in their sweet beatitude ;
So, perchance, while we keep Easter with earth's altars hung with flowers,
They deck Heaven's shining temple with the bloom of Eden's bowers,
And 'erewhile they wreath their garlands, talk together, sweet and low,
Of the sad days when the Saviour walked the paths of men, below,
And was homeless, and forsaken, and was crucified in scorn,
And in Joseph's tomb was buried till the third fair break of morn,
Then, burst forth ! in joy triumphant ! Lord of life and death, for aye !—
So, perhaps, our loved, in Heaven, keep the holy Easter day.
Or, perhaps, the throngs celestial, gather 'round the Master's throne,
And with heavenly hallelujahs hail him still, "*The Risen One.*"
While the clear, seraphic voices lift a song so wondrous sweet

That the hills put forth new flowers, from the prints of angels' feet,
Just to listen, with their petals full unfolded to the light,
And their hearts of incense open, charming Heaven with the sight.

Or, perhaps the little children may today for joy be led
Through the fairest vale in Heaven, sunlight crowning each dear head.
Not the sunlight, poor and fleeting, such as gleams in earthly skies,
But the *light of love* outbeaming from the gentle Saviour's eyes.
Think ! thine own sweet child is with them, with his gentle, happy face ;
On his brow the pure refulgence that is born of heavenly grace :
With the other holy children, safe from earthly sin and wrong,
Through those pleasant paths he wanders, with his heart attuned to song ;
Never through the fair forever, shall one sorrow cast its blight
On that gentle face whose smiling now is part of Heaven's light ;
Never shall the airy footsteps, by one sin, be led astray.
He is safe with God, in Heaven, on this lovely Easter day.

Yet think not his heart forgets thee for the joy of that high place ;
Often, like a star, his spirit shines from Heaven on thy face.
There, too, little babes are gathered, who had hardly smiled on earth
Ere the Father of all children gave to them the heavenly birth.
Think ! thy precious babe is resting on some loving angel's breast,
Some kind angel, God appointed just to tend that little guest,—
Just to fondle and caress it, every simple need to meet,
Till, at last, it smiles and prattles, as it hears thy coming feet,—
Till, at last, the angel lays it in thine own fond arms once more ;
Ah, how sweet to know that Heaven all the children shall restore !



“Some kind angel, God appointed just to tend that little guest.”

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Surely, then, no ill befalls them, there no harm can mar their grace,
For their angels, in their glory, e'er behold the Father's face ;
It may be the bright-faced children thus their happy Easter spend,
In that beauty-breathing kingdom where their youth shall never end.
Oh, the countless dreams of comfort we may cherish of their ways,
While we keep, with pure thanksgiving, on the earth our Easter days !

But I love to think, beloved, on this Easter morn in Heaven,
That the thoughts of those above us are to us more fully given ;
That their spirits draw more near us in these hours of hope and cheer,
Till their lips may almost whisper heavenly comfort in our ear ;
And that though we may not see them, yet, their forms about us move,
While they bend above our sorrows with the ministries of love.

Easter Morning ! Blessed Easter ! Were it not for thy fair hours
We should ne'er have known the surety of that land of fadeless flowers ;
We should ne'er have known the surety that the soul's immortal breath
Shall exhale in heavenly music on the further side of death.
Easter Morning ! Christ, my Master ! Christ, my risen Lord, divine !—
All the gladness, all the honor, all the love and praise are thine !—
Thine the majesty of conquest ! Thine the power to break our gloom !—
Thine the hand to ope life's portals out of every earthly tomb.
Who could know Thee, yet not love Thee ? Even Death must smile on Thee ;
Shine, Oh face of Christ, and lead us !—Star of Immortality !
By this light have countless spirits entered those eternal calms
Bounded only by the circle of the Everlasting Arms,—
By this light our hope hath substance of that world beyond our ken.—

By this light Faith stills all anguish in the troubled hearts of men.

Onward, then, Oh fellow pilgrims ! When this earthly race is run,
When, across this life's fair landscape, sinks the unreturning sun,
There will be no lonely journey still before thy weary feet ;
Think how all thy loved will meet thee, sent of God thy steps to greet.
Night will settle not upon thee ; thou wilt go not forth in dread ;
By the presence of thy kindred will thy feet be homeward led ;
And the old familiar faces will around thy soul appear,
And the old familiar voices bid thy spirit never fear ;
And when fades the light that's earthly, with its faint, dissolving view,
Thou wilt see the light that's heavenly, from the zenith breaking through.
That new life will open gently from the broken charm of this,
As a flower in springtime opens from its bud, at morning's kiss.
There will be no startling changes that will spell the soul with fear ;
Heaven ends this cold world's Winter like God's Summer drawing near ;
Then the truth we now but dream of will appear divinely plain,—
How that Death has lost its darkness since the Master rose again.
Oh, to live upon this promise ! Oh, to make our lives so grand
They may show each day the touches of the Maker's kingly hand !—
Oh, to live so true, so nobly, we may give the world at last
Memories springing up like flowers in the pathway we have passed,
After we are gone to blossom and to make the world more sweet,
And to mark the heavenly journey for the fall of others' feet.
Doubt no more when hope seems clouded ; clouds veil not God's holy view.
Every sorrow has its rainbow when in Heaven the storm is through.

Easter Morning ! Let its comfort light the path we take each day,
Till our doubts, like mists at morning, tinged with glory steal away ;
Till we stand no more like exiles, sad and lone, at close of even,
But, as sons of God triumphant, enter grandly into Heaven.

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